

In paragraph 7 of the second (final) Office Action, Examiner objected to a number of phrases. I discuss below why I believe that each is supported in the specification and/or well known in the art. In case any objections remain, I suggest additional deletions if required for allowance. I conclude with revised claims showing the optional deletions in [square brackets].

In the phrases "option control" and "option label" in new claims 25, 32 and 33: delete "option" from each phrase if required for allowance. The result: the terms ("control" and "label") will exactly match Figure 3 and the discussion thereof (applicant, page 12, lines 15-17). The phrases "option control" and "option label" do not appear in the specification because the "option" prefix was always implied by the context. I believe it's also clear in the context of the claim: "multiple options for a single data element". As for the terms by themselves: "option" and "control" are used in the specification over 30 times each and the term "label" over a dozen times.

In the phrase "each of which has two visually distinct states" in new claims 25, 32 and 33: delete "visually distinct" if required for allowance. The two "states" are clear from Figure 5 and the discussion thereof (applicant, page 15, lines 2-5). I believe that it is well understood in the art that these two states must be visually distinct to be useful as a user interface element, therefore the meaning of the claim is the same with and without the phrase. Sample visual distinctions are illustrated in Figures 4a and 4b. For Figure 4a, the "x" for a checkbox is very well known, therefore not described. For Figure 4b, the specification describes the visual difference (applicant, page 13, lines 20-21).

The phrase "and each of which has only one state: not selected" in new claims 25, 32 and 33 is simply a more precise elaboration of the common meaning of the term "label", and can also be deleted if required for allowance. Because the original claims were objected to as indefinite, I added this additional clarification. I believe the meaning is the same with or without the additional phrase, e.g. see the use of the term "label" in Apple's Human Interface Guidelines (<http://developer.apple.com/documentation/mac/HIGuidelines/HIGuidelines-148.html>).

The phrase "in a predetermined syntax" in new claim 32 is a term of art describing the textual input of a search engine. It can be deleted without changing the meaning or intent of the claim.

The phrase "zero or more" in new claim 32 (followed by "data objects that conform to the search criteria") is just a precise enumeration of the result from performing a search. It can be deleted without changing the meaning or intent of the claim.

Claims With Optional Deletions

Here is the result, with optional deletions shown in [square brackets]:

25. A system for viewing and selecting multiple options for a single data element, the system comprising:

a plurality of [option] controls, each of which has two [visually distinct] states: selected and not selected;

a plurality of [option] labels;

a plurality of subgroup labels, each of which identifies a set of related [option] controls [and each of which has only one state: not selected];

a controller configured to receive from a user-input device a single action associated with a[n option] control and toggle the state of this associated [option] control without affecting the selection state of any other [option] control;

whereby a user can see at a glance which subgroups and options are available and thus more quickly locate relevant options, and whereby a user can see at a glance which options are currently selected, making searches faster and easier.

32. A search system comprising:

a subsystem for viewing and selecting multiple options for a single data element, the subsystem comprising:

a plurality of [option] controls, each of which has two [visually distinct] states: selected and not selected;

a plurality of [option] labels;

a plurality of subgroup labels, each of which identifies a set of related [option] controls [and each of which has only one state: not selected];

a controller configured to receive from a user-input device a single action associated with a[n option] control and toggle the state of this associated [option] control without affecting the selection state of any other [option] control;

an information location mechanism coupled to a data repository containing a plurality of data objects, said information location mechanism being configured to receive search criteria [in a predetermined syntax], search the data repository, and retrieve [zero or more] data objects that conform to the search criteria;

a formatting engine to format the search results from said information location mechanism; and

a client process and visual display unit to display the search form, the formatted search results and the action trigger.

33. A method for viewing and selecting multiple options for a single data element, the method comprising:

displaying a plurality of [option] controls, each of which has two [visually distinct] states: selected and not selected;

displaying a plurality of [option] labels;

displaying a plurality of subgroup labels, each of which identifies a set of related [option] controls [and each of which has only one state: not selected];

receiving a single user action associated with a[n option] control,

toggling the selection state of this associated [option] control without affecting the selection state of any other control;

whereby a user can see at a glance which subgroups and options are available and thus more quickly locate relevant options, and whereby a user can see at a glance which options are currently selected, making searches faster and easier.

Conclusion

I believe that the above explanations and optional deletions are sufficient to resolve these minor terminology issues and therefore to yield an allowable application without the need for further proceedings.

Very respectfully,



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04-29-04
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